

**(12) PATENT APPLICATION**  
**(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE**

**(11) Application No. AU 200037796 A1**

**(54) Title**  
**Operation of gaming machines**

**(51)<sup>7</sup> International Patent Classification(s)**  
**A63F 005/04                      G06F 017/00**

**(21) Application No: 200037796**

**(22) Application Date: 2000.05.30**

**(30) Priority Data**

<b>(31) Number</b>	<b>(32) Date</b>	<b>(33) Country</b>
<b>PQ0706</b>	<b>1999.06.02</b>	<b>AU</b>

**(43) Publication Date : 2000.12.07**

**(43) Publication Journal Date : 2000.12.07**

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ABSTRACT

A gaming machine (30) offers a first base game to a player, in the nature of a spinning reel game. Three spinning reels (42-46) spin in accordance with each play of the game. On the occurrence of certain winning combinations, constituting a triggering event, a second bonus game is entered. In the bonus game three rows, respectively of two three and four playing cards, are arranged face down. A player is required to select one of the rows and then choose one card from that row, seeking to choose a winning card, such as a Joker. The respective odds of winning between the three lines of cards are unique integer multiples of each other.





AUSTRALIA

PATENTS ACT 1990

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION

FOR A STANDARD PATENT

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Invention Title:

Operation of Gaming Machines

ASSOCIATED PROVISIONAL APPLICATION DETAILS

[33] Country  
AU

[31] Applic. No(s)  
PQ0706

[32] Application Date  
02 Jun 1999

The following statement is a full description of this invention, including the best method of performing it known to me/us:-

## OPERATION OF GAMING MACHINES

### Field of the Invention

This invention relates to gaming machines, and particularly to a bonus game feature.

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### Background of the Invention

Video gaming machines also are commonly known as slot, poker or fruit machines, and provide a player with a game of chance. Money is inserted in a gaming machine, or electronically transferred, to purchase "credits" on the machine. The credits  
10 are then used to wager against games played, and all winnings and losses occur in credit value.

Traditional games played on gaming machines include spinning reel games, where various combinations of indicia appearing on simulated spinning reels across one  
15 or more win lines result in credits being awarded and added to the player's credit total. Other gaming machines offer card games, such as draw poker or blackjack. Common to both form of games is a secondary or bonus game feature, whereby, on any winning game of the primary or base game, a bonus mode is entered. In the bonus mode the winnings from the first game can be wagered, typically in a 'double up' scenario, viz., the winnings  
20 can be doubled or lost. Such 'double up' game features typically involve a binary choice, such as selecting whether a 'face down' card is of a red or black suit. In other forms, a 'beat the dealer' feature can be provided where a player is dealt a card, then must choose one card from four 'face down' cards that beats the revealed dealt card on face value. 'Double up' features have proved very popular with players of gaming machines.

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In many licensed premises in Australia, it is almost always the case that there will be a number of gaming machines provided by different vendors, and it is a particular motivation of vendors for their gaming machines to be played over others'. This is

relevant to both the income derived from the lease of the machines to the licensed premises and in seeking to ensure ongoing business with the licensed premises. It is thus a very real motivation for vendors to provide new and commercially useful game functions to attract players to their particular machines within any given licensed premises.

### Summary of the Invention

It is the object of the present invention to provide a game bonus feature that gives a player greater variety of choice and enjoyment in playing gaming machines having bonus game features.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a method for operation of a gaming machine, comprising the steps of:

providing a first game; and

on occurrence of a triggering event in a play of said first game, entering a second bonus game in which a common game type with two or more game choices is provided, said game choices having respective odds of winning of  $1/n$ , where  $n$  is the number of possible selections within each game choice, and  $n$  is a unique value for each said choice.

The invention further discloses a gaming machine comprising:

a display by which game play is displayed to a player;

player input controls for player interaction in game play; and

a programmed controller, having control over game play and operation, and operable to provide a first game, and on occurrence of a triggering event in play of the first game to enter a second bonus game in which a common game type with two or more game choices is provided, said game choices having respective odds of winning of  $1/n$ , where  $n$  is the number of possible selections within each game choice, and  $n$  is a unique value for each said choice.

Once a game choice is made, a further individual game play choice is made by the player upon which the outcome of the bonus game is determined.



In a preferred embodiment, the choices are displayed to a player graphically in a manner to indicate the ascending or descending odds. In one form, the choices can be as lines of face down cards to be revealed, arranged as a pyramid. The lines can have one common winning card amongst them.

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Practise of the present invention is commercially advantageous in that there will be increased interest and enjoyment by players of gaming machines increased sales of machines by vendors and increased revenues for the operators of licensed premises and taxing authorities such as governments.

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#### Brief Description of the Drawings

An embodiment of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a schematic block diagram of a video gaming machine;

Fig. 2 shows a representative screen display illustrating normal base game play;

and

Figs. 3 and 4 show a representative screen display illustrating the bonus game feature.

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#### Description of Preferred Embodiments

Fig. 1 is a schematic block diagram showing the basic component parts of a known video gaming machine 30, in which the video display 20 is connected with a processor control unit 32 by a video interface link 34. The control unit 32 contains resident software that has control over all of the operations of the gaming machine 30, including play of the game and simulation of the spinning reels 22-26 on the display 20. The control unit 32 also is coupled with an input/output module 36 by an internal bus 38. The input/output module 36, in turn, connects by the bus 38 to lamps and switches 40 associated with the gaming machine, and to player pushbuttons or controls 42 by which a player can wager desired credit units, select the number of win lines per play of the game

and activate play of the game. A known gaming machine upon which software embodying the invention can be run includes the present applicant's Game King™ type gaming machine. Software embodying the invention resides in the EPROM memory within the processor control unit 32 and is written in the "C" or "assembler" programming languages. Those skilled in the art would be able to implement an embodiment of the invention in software, as a matter of routine.

Fig. 2 shows a representation of the screen display 40 of a video gaming machine, offering a 'base' or 'primary' game to a player. Each of three simulated reels 42-46 spin in play of the game with the resulting combinations of indicia occurring on any one of the (in this case) five 'win lines' determining the outcome of the game. As is well known, a player feeds a number of coins into the gaming machine to provide credits upon which to play the base game. The player pushbuttons 42 for controlling game play include a lower row of win line selection buttons 48 and an upper row of bet buttons 50 by which a player can wager 1, 2, 3, 5 or 10 credits per line per play.

For any play of the base game there will be a resulting combination of symbols appearing on the three reels and, thus, on the selected number of win lines. If there is a winning combination on any of the win lines, then the supplemental or bonus game feature is entered. This is one example of a 'triggering event'.

Fig. 3 shows a screen display 40' similiar to that of Fig. 2, but in this case of a touch screen type, meaning that the separate player controls 42 (shown at Fig. 2) are incorporated into the display 40'.

In this example, the player has won 52 credits in play of the base game (i.e. Fig. 2), and the bonus game feature is now entered such that the display presents the various indicia as shown at Fig. 3. Particularly, there are three rows, respectively of 2, 3 and 4 playing cards arranged face down. As can be noted, the arrangement of the cards is

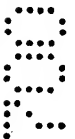


playing cards arranged face down. As can be noted, the arrangement of the cards is pyramidal, giving an aesthetic feel, linking to the multiple odds possibility available to the player. The three indicia 60, 62, 64 on the right hand side of the display 40', indicate to the player the current winnings available to be wagered in the bonus game feature and the possible winnings. With reference to the indicia 70, 72, 74 shown on the left hand side of the display 40', it can be seen that for the top-most row of two cards there is the prospect of doubling the winnings - perfectly balanced odds. For the middle row of three cards there is the prospect of trebling the winnings, and for the bottom-most row of four cards there is the possibility of quadrupling the winnings. There is an integer relationship between the winnings for each row.

A further indicia 78 located at the lower right hand corner of the display 40' is a "TAKE WIN" control, by which the player can step out of the game bonus feature and return to the base game. The game bonus feature operates by placing a 'Joker' card at one position in each of the three rows. It is then for the player to choose one of the rows, and thus the level of the gamble, then select which card within the row is the 'Joker' card. This is done by the player touching the screen to select the card of choice.

Fig. 4 shows that the player has selected the middle card of the middle row which, as it transpires, was the 'Joker' card in that row, in which case the bonus wager has been successful and the player's winnings from the base game have been increased from 52 to 156, as shown in the Win Meter of the display 40'. The display 40' also shows the location of the 'Joker' cards in the other two rows, in 'greyed-out' form. The player can now either 'take the winning' so that the 156 credits will be added to the credit tally, (i.e.  $2908 + 156 = 3064$ ), or play the bonus game feature again.

As will be apparent to one skilled in the art, the winning 'Joker' card can be substituted by any other convenient playing card, for example an Ace of Spades. What is important, however, is that one winning card is present in each of the respective rows. Taking the example of the bottom-most row in Figs. 3 and 4; there are four cards, of



which only one is a win card, meaning that the chances of correctly choosing that card are '1 in 4', which directly relates to the win multiplier of "x 4".

Numerous alterations and modifications, as would be apparent to one skilled in  
5 the art, are to be considered as incorporated herein.



The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A method for operation of a gaming machine, comprising the steps of:  
providing a first game; and  
5 on occurrence of a triggering event in a play of said first game, entering a second bonus game in which a common game type with two or more game choices is provided, said game choices having respective odds of winning  $1/n$ , where  $n$  is the number of possible selections within each game choice, and  $n$  is a unique value for each said choice.
- 10 2. A method as claimed in claim 1, comprising the further step, relating to a chosen said game choice, of a game play choice being made to determine the outcome of said bonus game.
3. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said game choices are  
15 displayed graphically in a manner to indicate the graduation of winning odds.
4. A method as claimed in claim 3, comprising the further step of, upon a successful game play choice being made, awarding winnings, wherein said winnings are  $n$  times for each respective game choice.
- 20 5. A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein said bonus game is a card game, and said game choices represent dealt hands of cards having an increasing number of cards per hand, and said game play choice is the choice of one card from a chosen hand.
- 25 6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein said first game is a spinning reel game, and said triggering event is the occurrence of any one of a plurality of predetermined winning combinations.
- 30 7. A gaming machine comprising:  
a display by which game play is displayed to a player;  
player input controls for player interaction in game play; and  
a programmed controller, having control over game play and operation, and operable to provide a first game, and on occurrence of a triggering event in play of the



first game to enter a second bonus game in which a common game type with two or more game choices is provided, said game choices having respective odds of winning of  $1/n$ , where  $n$  is the number of possible selections within each game choice, and  $n$  is a unique value for each said choice.

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8. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 7, wherein for a chosen said game choice, a game play choice, input via the player input controls, determines the outcome of said bonus game.

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9. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 8, wherein said game choices are displayed on said display graphically in a manner to indicate the graduation of winning odds.

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10. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 9, wherein said bonus game is a card game, and said game choices are represented on the display as dealt hands of cards having an increasing number of cards per hand, and said game play choice is the choice made by the player input controls of one card from a chosen hand.

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11. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 10, wherein said controller provides said first game as a spinning reel game displayed on the display, and said triggering event is the occurrence of any one of a plurality of predetermined winning combinations.

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DATED this Fourteenth Day of July 2000

I.G.T. (Australia) Pty Limited

Patent Attorneys for the Applicant

SPRUSON & FERGUSON



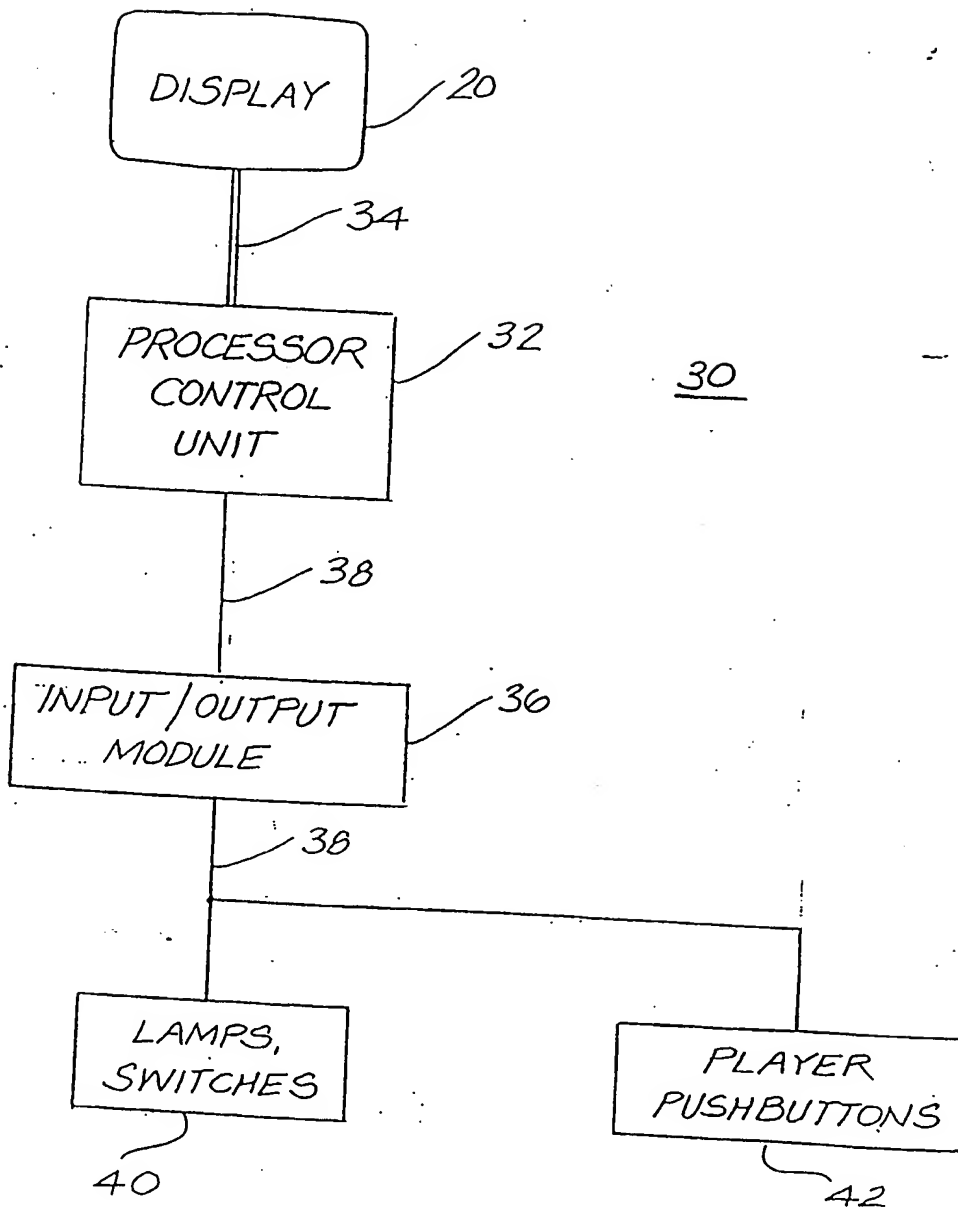


FIG. 1

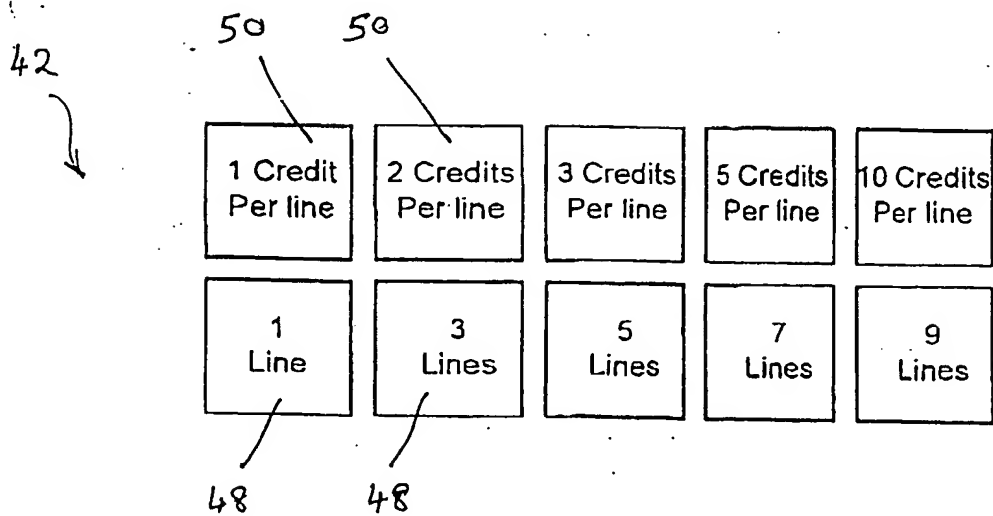
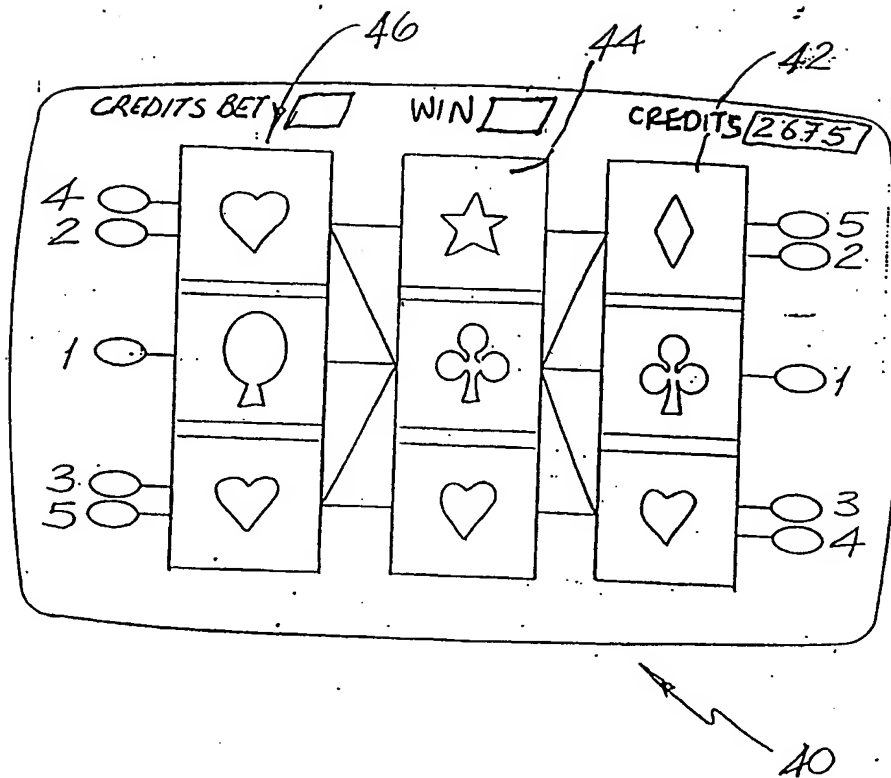


FIG. 2

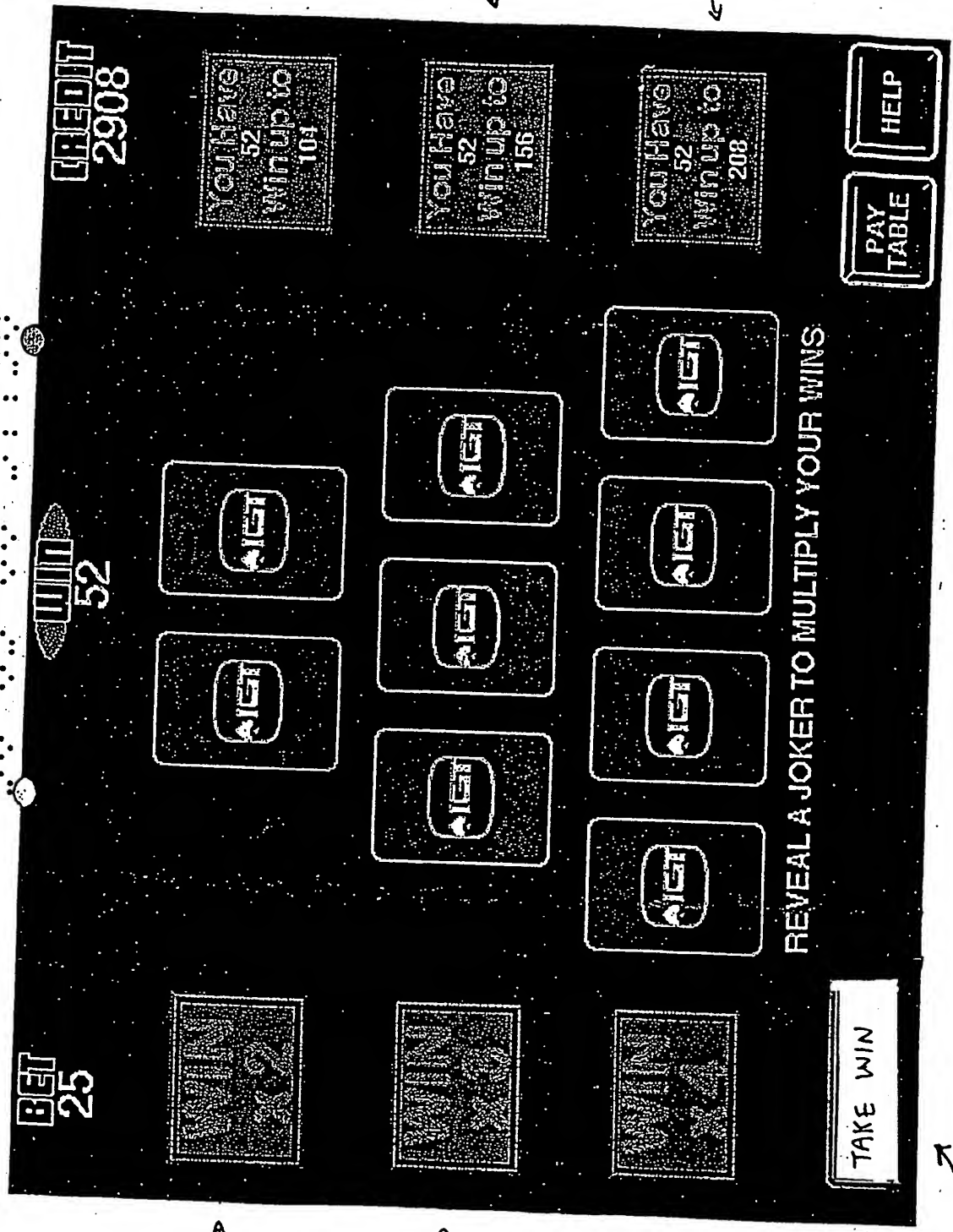


FIG. 3

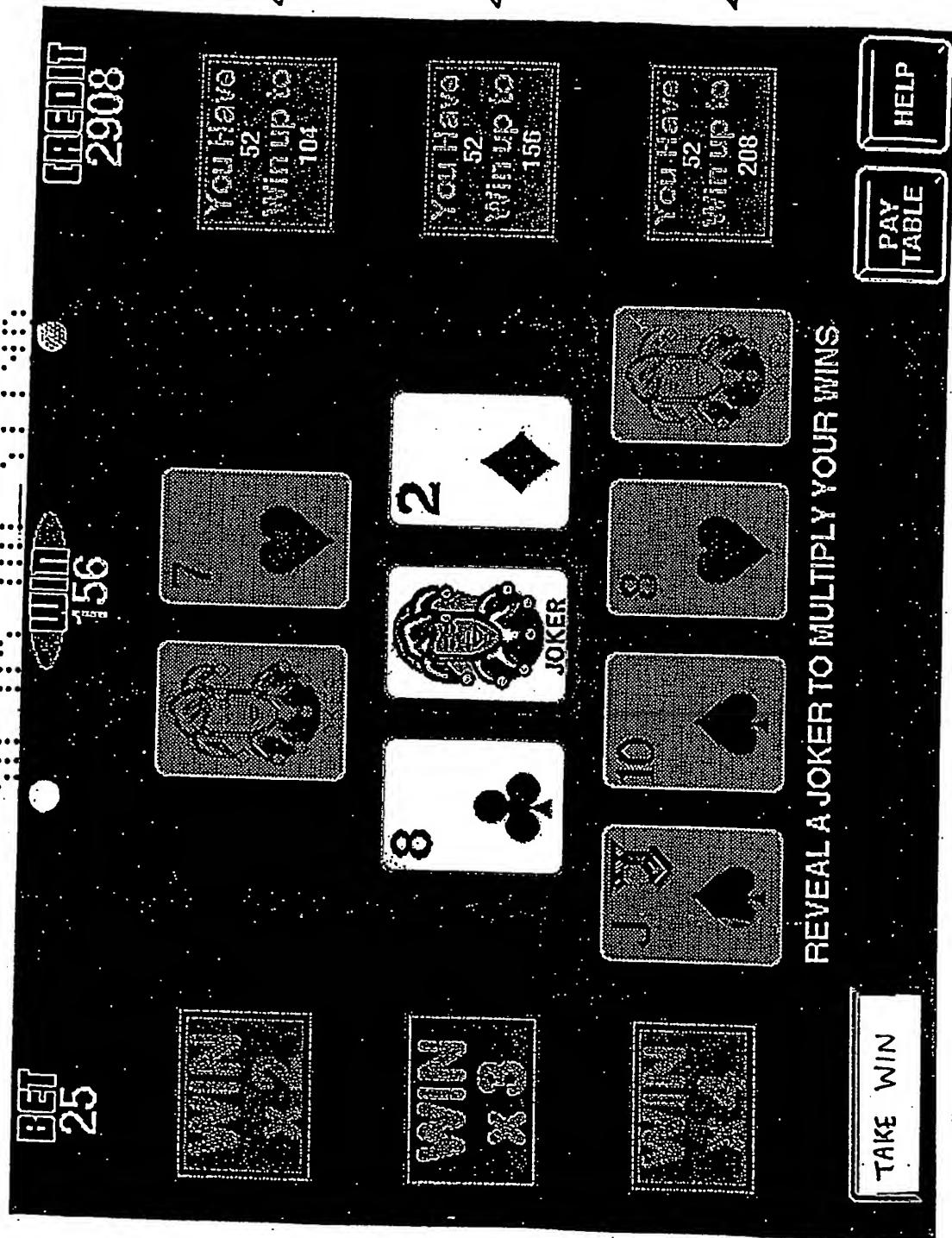


FIG. 4



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